

## Exploring Setting in the Novel

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Because of the greater length and complexity of the novel, **setting** is also allowed to play an even greater role in the novel than in the short story.

### MULTIPLE SETTINGS IN THE NOVEL

The fact that novels often take place in a variety of settings allows novelists a number of options that increase the richness and complexity of the novel.

**More settings allow for greater variety of plot.** Because the action of a novel can move from setting to setting, novelists have the opportunity to develop a variety of setting backgrounds to enhance the plot. (Note how the variety of settings in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* adds to the color and drama of the Joad family's journey from Oklahoma to California.)

**Multiple settings allow contrasts between settings.** Novelists can use contrasts in settings to suggest important parallels and contrasts between characters. (Think about the differences between the young hero's pampered life in his father's wealthy home and the rough life he experiences at sea in Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous*.)

### GREATER DEVELOPMENT OF SETTINGS IN THE NOVEL

The length of the novel gives novelists a greater opportunity to develop settings more fully:

**Novels can develop more detailed settings.** With more space available to develop settings, novelists can introduce more details to create a more realistic "sense of place" for the reader and create a more effective sense of atmosphere and mood. (Consider Aldous Huxley's detailed vision of a society of the future in his novel *Brave New World*.)

**More developed settings play a greater role in plot.** Being able to present fully developed settings, novelists are able to use them to play important roles—almost as "characters" in the plot. Novelists have more time to show how a specific setting can influence the attitudes of important characters or even shape the action itself. (Think about the important role that the deserted island plays in changing the behavior of the stranded boys in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.)

### QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE YOU ARE READING A NOVEL:

1. What are the major settings? How do multiple settings function in the novel? Does the author suggest important parallels or contrasts between different settings?
2. Are there settings that the novelist has worked especially hard to develop? Do these settings play any special role in your understanding of characters or plot action?